



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The Community Schools Initiative, a part of Children's Home + Aid's Educational Services, has partnered with Chicago Public Schools since 2002 to alleviate the barriers to learning created by poverty and violence for students attending struggling schools in the city.

Since 2008, we have served as a lead non-profit partner with Earle Elementary and Mays Academy, located in Chicago's Englewood community, where students struggle to thrive in one of the city's most impoverished, violent, and resource-limited communities. Our partnership allows us to providing desperately needed supportive services that help encourage students' academic achievement and social-emotional development.

The Community Schools Initiative provides supportive services to students and parents in a safe, structured and nurturing environment, utilizing a four prong approach in providing services:

1. [Academic Support](#)
2. [Student Enrichment](#)
3. [Family Engagement](#)
4. [Mental Health and Health Programs](#)

For our students and parent programming we utilize the developmental triangle as a guide and focus on a **Core Academic Support (academic programs and classes), Enrichment (arts and sports); and Social Services (mental health services, parent involvement, leadership and other pro-social programs).**

Guided by the needs and strengths of each school, Children's Home + Aid's dedicated staff provide a comprehensive array of programs and services to approximately 200 children and their families at two Chicago Public Schools, Benjamin E. Mays Elementary Academy and the Charles W. Earle Elementary School.

Every child starts their afternoon with a nutritious snack. Academic support, including academic remediation, homework help and academic enrichment, is provided, followed by enrichment activities. Enrichment activities vary depending on the needs and interests of students and include art, theater, leadership, sports, dance, martial arts, music, creative writing and gardening.

Community Schools Initiative Outcomes

According to research by the Chapin Hall Data Collaborative at the University of Chicago, participants in our Community Schools Initiative fared better than their peers across many academic and socio-emotional indicators. Over the 2014-2015 school year, the Community Schools Initiative served approximately 176 children and their families, helping children to achieve outstanding results, including:

- **Increased School Attendance:** In the 2014-2015 school year, Community Schools participants demonstrated significantly higher attendance rates of 97.8% than their school-based peers at 96.1% and CPS peers overall at 95.5%.
- **Improved Grades and Test Scores:** In Spring 2015, 44% of enrolled Community Schools participants were meeting or exceeding NWEA standards in reading compared to just 35% of their school-based peers; and 46% of Community Schools participants were meeting or exceeding NWEA standards in math compared to 33% of their school-based peers.
- **Increased Engagement:** Of students served, 80% demonstrated a sense of competence as a learner, compared to 73% of students served by similar after-school programs. Community Schools youth participants reported a 10% higher feeling of connectedness to the school community than the CPS average.

The National Community Schools Movement

Children’s Home + Aid’s Community Schools Initiative is a part of a national movement, dedicated to a strategy of connecting schools, families, and the broader community to work together to meet the needs of the whole child. Parents, students, principals, teachers, community members and resources are aligned according to a comprehensive needs assessment. Research on the impact of community schools programming in Chicago has shown that for every \$1 we invest in Community Schools programming, society saves \$4 in future costs.



Children’s Home + Aid’s Dedicated Staff

Each Community School program is lead by a Site-based Community School Manager who is knowledgeable about the surrounding community. Each manager works to build relationships with the school and the community to meet the increasingly complex needs of struggling schools’ students and create opportunities for them to thrive academically. Children’s Home + Aid’s staff’s efforts to build trust and credibility with their school partners has been recognized as a model for partnership building by a three year evaluation of community schools programs conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Community School Sites: Going Where the Need is Greatest

The Community Schools Initiative’s school sites are located in Chicago’s Englewood community which has some of the city’s highest reported rates of unemployment, poverty, violent crime, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, domestic violence, homelessness, child abuse and school dropout, all of which pose significant challenges to a student’s readiness to learn and succeed academically. Gang activity and street violence make unsupervised after-school time a dangerous prospect for students. In addition, all of the schools struggle to meet minimum state testing standards.

School	Address	Neighborhood	Partner Since
Earle Elementary	2040 W. 62nd St.	Englewood	2008
Mays Academy	6656 S. Normal Blvd. 60621	Englewood	2008

Dante: Achieving Success in the Face of Adversity

Dante came to Chase Elementary after being expelled from another school in the 5th grade. Dante came in with a chip on his shoulder twice his size and from day one he tried to prove himself with bravado. His cousins were already involved in the Community School program at Chase and so Dante was enrolled. Within the first half hour of the program, Dante was sent to see the Site Manager. Expecting to be expelled from the program, Dante was surprised to find that the Site Manager wanted to discuss solutions to the problems he was facing. From that day forward, with the support of Community Schools staff, Dante began to make positive changes in his life. Through participating in academic enrichment programming, Dante was able to improve his literacy skills from a third grade level to a sixth grade reading level within his first year. This year Dante is in 8th grade, a leader in every one of his classes, an athlete, a dancer, and an actor. Because of his involvement in the Community Schools program, Dante’s future is full of hope and opportunity.